Gov't Unveils Creative Ireland Funding

FROM THE HOB
Paul Keating

ACK in the darkest days of the economy when the 2008 economic offering was being assembled in Parnell House in Dublin's Phoenix Park for an Irish economic forum much like the Davos gathering happening right now for the World Economic Forum. Financially, the government had a more pleasant duty to do for government minister than to travel to the cultural capital of New York and win a spot in the gallery. The budget has made available funds to the Irish Arts Center, and that was Humphreys' brief last week.

Arriving in time for opening night last Wednesday at the Brooklyn Academy of Music of the revived Martin McDonagh play, The Beauty Queen of Leenane under the direction of Gary Franke of the Druid Theatre Company, Humphreys wasted no time in signaling a bolstered presence for Creative Ireland, programing in America this year.

The Drift production will be at BAM until February 6th and is one of a host of artists and work that will benefit from a national €158 million investment in the normal budget this year thanks to the Creative Ireland initiative and director to director sk, who accompanied Humphreys to New York.

Last Thursday night at the Irish Arts Center with board members Lovetta Brennen, Guckman and Irish Arts General Barbara Jones in house - two of the center's strongest advocates - Humphreys paid a ceremonial visit to the city's first resident with two tasks to perform.

The Irish government had already decided to make another huge contribution to the center's capital building fund of €10,000,000 to hasten the ground breaking event later this year, and Humphreys had the check to deliver.

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Humphreys, working with associate Christine Sisk (currently the director of the Irish Arts Centre), led the team of performing artists, theater and dance ensembles that wished to develop tourism opportunities there.

The process evolved over a number of years, but the high cost of exhibiting and bringing people over on spot proved difficult. Yet a number of liners and effective sculptures were built and a number of partnerships developed which have proven very useful.

Last week in New York City we heard the first hand of a marvellous and inspired new initiative announced last December in Ireland called Creative Ireland.

They think and work outside the box for their own benefit and that of Culture Ireland, who can only work with other cultural regions in New York City like BAM, St. Ann's Warehouse (now in their own home) and the Baryshnikov Arts Center where programing will be shared this year thanks to the increased support.

That kind of collaboration also was a key part of Humphreys' main mission.

On Friday morning at the Irish Consulate on Park Avenue, Humphreys delivered her keynote address outlining the aspirations of the new Creative Ireland initiative.

The conference began with the creative arts capital building fund of €10,000,000, an increase of 30 percent according to Sisk.

With the Cybershop a new home for it before it is demolished. Then begins the two-year reconstruction process designed by Ireland's Office of Public Works as additional support from the Irish government.

At this point some might be wondering why the Irish Arts Center is situated with all this attention and funding. While their headquarters at 355 West 31st Street may be humble and diminutive, their programming prowess and fundraising skills are exceptional, pushing way above its weight, just like Ireland has with its cultural influence around the world.

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